

Armstrong County
Conservation District

Strategic Planning Outcomes

February 2005

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Overview

In November of 2004, Armstrong County Conservation District contacted Canaan Valley Institute about facilitating a strategic planning process. Currently, the Conservation District manages 51 programs and is consistently asked to take on more responsibility. With staff, office space and budget constraints, the District wanted to prioritize program efforts, set goals and build an action plan that could guide the District's decision making process for allocating staff time and financial resources.

Prior to the strategic planning workshop, the District mailed 150 surveys to solicit input from County Commissioners, District and Associate Directors, Cooperating Agencies, Nominating Organizations and Department of Environmental Protection Water Quality staff. The survey asked participants a series of 8 questions that identified important resource issues within the county, rated the district's performance in addressing those issues, and asked how the district could improve its outreach effort. It also asked participants to comment on mission and vision for the future of the District. 20 surveys were returned which represents a 13.3% response rate which is well above the average mail survey response rate of 5%. A compilation of results of the survey can be found in appendix A.

Also prior to the workshop, the District Directors were asked to rank District objectives in the areas of erosion and sediment control; education and youth; District image and public relations; landuse; District operations and personnel; watershed development and dredging. A score of 1 indicated a high priority area and the higher the numbers assigned indicated areas of low priority. Unfortunately, only 3 of the 7 Directors responded. Results of the ranking can be found in Appendix B.

On January 21, 2005 the strategic planning workshop was held at the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center. 21 people participated including staff, directors, associate directors, cooperating agency personnel and nominating organizations. District Manager Dave Rupert gave an overview of the District's history with some of the challenges and opportunities the District has encountered since 1982. Jerry Longwell, District Secretary/Treasurer and long time director reviewed the district's program goals. The current mission statement which was adopted by the board in 2001 was reviewed and discussed. It was decided that the mission statement needed revised and a vision statement developed. This task would be delegated to one group during the afternoon breakout sessions.

A nominal group process was used to prioritize the District's five top programs by program areas. Participants were then broken into work groups to develop action plans. While participants made good progress on the development of the action plans, it was decided that another meeting on February 23 would be scheduled to add more detail to these.

Timeline for the strategic planning document is to have a draft ready for the District Director's review in March and an adopted plan by May.

Attendance List

David R. Rupert, District Manager
Christine Cramer, Assistant District Manager/Tech I
Sharon Cockroft, Clerk II
David Beale, Watershed Specialist/Tech II
Jessica Schaub, ACT /NM Technician
DeJay Claypoole, Director
Dennis Hawley, Director
Patricia Kirkpatrick, Director
Andrew Kimmel, Director
Jerry Longwell, Director
Spurgeon Shilling, Director
Pam Meade, Associate Director
Bill Schall, Associate Director
Ron Steffey, AmeriCorps
Jared Anthony, AmeriCorps
Gary Gilmore, DCNR
Ed Huston, Farm Service Agency
Luke Vogel, Farm Service Agency
Laurel Hoffman, NRCS
Chuck Kubasik, DEP Conservation Program Specialist

Workshop Outcomes

Mission Statement:

The Armstrong County Conservation District in cooperation with public and private partners will promote conscientious stewardship of our natural resources through educational, technical and other financial support programs. **(Proposed by committee)**

Vision Statement:

Armstrong County Conservation District will prosper as a result of environmental stewardship programs that have restored watershed health and soil fertility. **(Proposed by committee)**

Future Challenges for Armstrong County Conservation District

- Long Term Financial Stability
- Environmental Education: within schools; envirothon; over coming political/financial challenges; lag time; need for cons. Educator for those who want one
- Financial & Public support for GIS
 - Training
 - Get people to understand how it can be used
- Viable Ag (factory farms) community: aging farmers- no replacements; development threats; transplant farmers

- Development (urban sprawl) issues: runoff; social/political issues; pesticides/herbicides; zoning controlled development
- Regulation discrepancies and inequities: farmers vs. 'bunny huggers'
- Proper Sustainable Forest management. by landowners
- Critics: industry needed; jobs needed
- Utilize existing infrastructure
- Finding a balance between green and growth
- Retain Quality of life
- Water quality – protection
- Lack of authority – hands are tied by Harrisburg
- Harrisburg's ability to undo what has been done
- Constantly chasing dollars is the driving factor – economics
- Gaining public support
- Maintain flexibility within district

Top 5 Priority Programs by General Program Area
Appendix C lists program descriptions

Technical Assistance Problems

1. Sustainable Ag program (18)
2. Dirt & Gravel Road (13)
3. WQ & Assessment & Protection Program (12)
4. Armstrong County Conservancy / Allegheny Valley Land Trust Assistance (11)
5. Info Tech. Development (GIS) (10)
- Municipal Assistance for E&S problems (2)
- Growing Smarter Program (8)
- RC&D Program (1)
- Sustainable Forestry Program (7)
- Ag technician program (5)
- Dry Hydrant Program (7)
- Project & Organizational Assistance Program through GG grants (8)
- Ohio River Basin Initiative (5)
- West Nile Virus & Gypsy Moth Education Program (0)
- WPCAMR (3)

Capacity Building Programs

1. Staff Development & Training (23)
2. District Director Training & Development (11)
3. AmeriCorps/Intern Program (11)
4. Cooperator Assistance Program (12)
5. Nominating Organizations Program (10)
- Associate Director Program (8)
- Cooperative Agency Program (8)
- EEO Program (2)
- NRCS Clerical Assistance Program (3)
- Conservation District Administrative Program (2)
- Conservation District Financial Accountability & Payroll Service (7)
- Topo Map Sales Program (1)
- Sand Mound Design Program (1)

Outreach Programs

1. Environmental Education Programs – schools (21)
2. Conservation Outreach Program (16)
3. Envirothon (15)
4. ATV Abuse Program (10)
5. Conservation Tour & Workshop (9)
- Resource Stewardship Program (6)
- Arbor Day Program (2)
- Litter Awareness Program (2)
- Web Page and District Brochure (3)
- Dayton Fair Display (2)
- Tree & Seedling Sales Program (8)
- Annual combined banquet & awards recognition Program (3)
- Annual report (1)

- District image & public relations program (1)

Natural Resource Conservation Programs

1. Farmland Preservation & Ag Security Area Program (22)
2. DEP E&S Control Program (17)
3. NPDES Program (14)
4. Project Grass & GLFCC Program (14)
5. Creekside Mushroom Assistance (9)
 - Biosolids Program (6)
 - Protected Lands Program (4)
 - Comprehensive Dredging Policy Program (4)

Break Out Work Group Participants

1. Goals and Organizational Mission and Vision

Denney Hawley
Laurel Hoffman (Reporter)
Jared Anthony

2. Outreach

Andrew Kimmel
Pam Meade
Ron Steffy
Dave Beale (Reporter)

3. Capacity Building

Spurgeon Shilling
Jessica Schaub
Sharon Cockroft – Reporter

4. Natural Resource Programs

Jerry Longwell
Chuck Kubasik
Ed Huston
Chris Cramer – Reporter

5. Technical Assistance

D.J. Claypoole
Gary Gilmore
Luke Vogel
Dave Rupert – Reporter